



COMMUNICATION-FOCUSED THERAPY® (CFT) AND ATTACHMENT
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Communication-Focused Therapy® (CFT) is a psychotherapy developed by the author, which has been described for a large number of mental health conditions. Attachment is the expectation and hope that a meaningful interaction will continue.

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Attachment

Attachment is the expectation or hope that a source of meaningful information continues to be available. It plays a role not only early in life but also later. Healthy attachment plays an important role in the maintenance of relationships and in any area of life where one interacts repeatedly with another person, such as the work area. When looking at pathological attachment patterns, it is easy to overlook that attachment makes investments in relationships possible, such as in a professional mentoring relationship or a romantic relationship. And, attachment can be better understood when one looks more closely at the communication dynamics that are there in the beginning, the maintenance and, if it comes to it, the detachment phase. Communication patterns make attachment possible, while the experience of attachment also facilitates communication, which otherwise may not have been possible. Attachment provides a sense of a safe space to exchange information that constitutes and investment into a relationship.

Our ability to attach ourselves is important for growth and survival, if it happens from a position of freedom and choice. While attachment may seem to restrict the freedom to choose in the future, it can lead to greater satisfaction in life and more choices, if a meaningful benefit can be derived from the relationship. In this regard, attachment in childhood may seem an anomaly, because an infant is not free to choose. However, it is easy to forget that this particular attachment situation has another side to it as well, the attachment of the parents to the child. This mutual attachment system is an important phase where the groundwork is laid for the selection and maintenance of attachment patterns in the future. A more general lesson is that attachment always has two sides, the person attaching and the one being attached to. The communication patterns usually give a clue on the dynamics and whether the attachment style is healthy.



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Attachment plays a role throughout life. Our ability to attach ourselves is still important in a modern world. However, because of negative experiences in childhood and later many people are too afraid to attach themselves, which can cause a lot of problems, particularly in romantic relationships. The fear of attachment is often not a fear of the attachment process itself, but the expectation that it will not be reciprocated, the wished for meaningful interaction not develop and that one cannot end the attachment.

Developing communication patterns, both internally and externally, that make it easier to select, maintain and end attachment do not only instill a greater sense of efficacy and safety in relationships, but they also make it easier to have the relationships where attachment plays a significant role. They also help to overcome the loss of attachment, whether self-initiated or caused by another. We are never free from our emotions, which make us human, but we have the freedom to form connections and attachments again. The ability to detach makes it also possible to attach. Having a greater insight into the own basic parameters (Haverkamp, 2018), the needs, values and aspirations, helps to gain more freedom and a greater realization of choice when entering relationships and forming attachments. Communication-Focused Therapy (CFT) looks at communication patterns, which also helps build greater awareness for and experiment with them.

In a case of attachment ambivalence or resistance it is particularly important to have greater insight into the own needs, values and aspirations. This also helps to develop communication patterns that are better aligned with oneself (Haverkamp, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c). In patients with attachment issues, the ability to read and send messages in an interaction with another human being is often reduced because of ineffective and maladaptive communication patterns (Haverkamp, 2010a, 2013). A hurt that could not be processed causes the individual to take a distance from communicating with others, never allowing full attachment, which makes attachment and commitment in relationships more difficult.

Communication and attachment are tightly linked. Greater attachment can also mean deeper more meaningful communication, while a greater history of meaningful communication can make attachment more likely. When they work together, they can help provide the information the individual needs to live well and thrive. However, if one of the two breaks down or does not work as well anymore this can lead



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into a vicious cycle where any autoregulatory processes may not be strong enough to provide a way out. Insecure attachment patterns in childhood, whether anxious, avoidant, chaotic or otherwise, are carried over into the present because of maladaptive internal and external communication patterns (Haverkamp, 2017). They impair to the extent that helpful and constructive meaningful information can be absorbed. CFT provides tools to adjust or end old communication patterns, while also forming more effective and adaptive new ones (Haverkamp, 2010b, 2017).



Dr Christian Jonathan Haverkamp, M.D. (Vienna) MLA (Harvard) LL.M. (ULaw) trained in medicine, psychiatry and psychotherapy and works in private practice for psychotherapy, counselling and psychiatric medication in Dublin, Ireland. He is the author of over 200 articles and several books and the founder of Communication-Focused Therapy®. The author can be reached by email at jonathanhaverkamp@gmail.com or on the websites www.jonathanhaverkamp.com and www.jonathanhaverkamp.ie.



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